

A Prayer Before Study

Saint Thomas Aquinas

"Come, Holy Spirit, Divine Creator, true source of light and fountain of wisdom! Pour forth your brilliance upon my dense intellect, dissipate the darkness which covers me, that of sin and of ignorance. Grant me a penetrating mind to understand, a retentive memory, method and ease in learning, the lucidity to comprehend, and abundant grace in expressing myself. Guide the beginning of my work, direct its progress, and bring it to successful completion. This I ask through Jesus Christ, true God and true man, living and reigning with You and the Father, forever and ever. Amen."

This Fall in Faith Formation

Confirmation starts with a parent/ candidate orientation on **Saturday, September 15** at 10:00am.

Our **Faith Formation programming** will begin on **September 23** with a **Parent / Youth Rally**. Our guest speaker for the evening will be Ms. Margaret Brogden. She is the DRE at St. Clement Mary Hofbauer in Baltimore and previous served at the Coordinator for Youth Ministry training for the Archdiocese of Baltimore. This gathering will occur from 6:45pm to 8pm.



Classes begin the next weekend. English language classes are available on Sundays, following the 5:30pm Mass from 6:45pm to 8pm. There are Spanish language classes that meet during the same time as well as another option on Saturday afternoons from 5:45pm to 7pm leading into the 7pm Spanish Mass. They will be held on the weekends of September 30, October 7, October 28, November 4, and November 11 and will continue until April.

Our parish youth minister will conduct an **parents-only session** on Sunday, evening, October 23 to discuss the Fears of Our Young People. Please join us.



Preparing for the School Year Novena

What is a Novena?

Novenas are an ancient tradition that goes back to the days of the Apostles. Jesus told His disciples to pray together after His ascension into heaven, so they went to an upper room along with the Blessed Virgin Mary, (Acts 1:14) and joined constantly in prayer for nine days. These nine days of constant prayer by the Apostles at the direction of Jesus led up to Pentecost. This is when the Holy Spirit descended upon the disciples as “tongues of fire” (Acts 2:1-4). This pattern of nine days of prayer is the basis of the novenas we pray today.

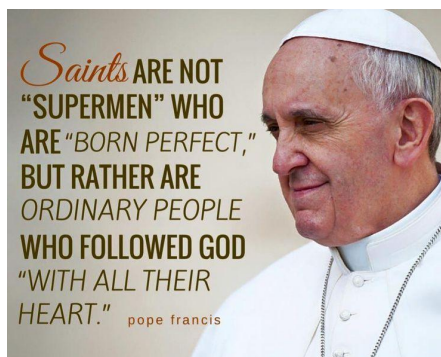
Thus, the novena is an imitation of the Lord’s command to the Apostles when they prayed for nine days in anticipation of the coming of the Holy Spirit. This Novena is offered with the examples of holy young people. May these young witnesses throughout our faith tradition help prepare for the upcoming school year. There are things to consider and discuss, commitments to contemplate and make, and prayers for God’s assistance to be offered.

What if I miss a day?

That’s okay, it happens! If you miss a day, you can do one of a few things... You can either: 1) skip the day you missed altogether, 2) say two of the daily prayers in one day to catch up, or 3) say the prayer of the day you missed and just be one day behind everybody else.

It’s up to you, and whatever you choose to do is okay. There are no “rules” and there are no “consequences.” God is forgiving and merciful!

Please know that our church’s prayers are with you as you enter into this school year.



9. The “Little Way”



People who serve as holy examples are not just limited to the scriptures. Since Jesus came into this world, died, and rose again, there have been many who have followed in the path of discipleship,

And while many have excelled in achievements for the Lord, there are many others who have lead simple, quiet lives of holiness as well.

Consider St. Therese of Lisieux. She is known for her "little way" of loving people: “I applied myself above all to practice quite hidden little acts of virtue and sought a thousand opportunities of rendering them service (Story of A Soul, Chapter VII).”

Consider:

- St. Therese considered pressing laundry for the religious sisters with who she lived as a “little Thing.” At school, what are the thousand opportunities available to render service?

Commit:

As the school year begins and looking over the past eight days of commitments, what is a “little thing” to which I can reaffirm as a commitment?

Pray:

Lord, send your Spirit to guide us and strengthen us as we get closer to the beginning of the school year. Help us to become more like Therese and do “little things” for others. Help us to seek and do God’s will.

Christ, our teacher, help us to learn the ways of love and service. We ask this through Christ Our Lord, AMEN

8. Whatever



The apostle Paul writes to young disciple Timothy the following encouragement: *Let no one have contempt for your youth, but set an example for those who believe, in speech, conduct, love, faith, and purity.*

In another epistle, Paul spells out the attitude necessary to set such an example:

Whatever is true, whatever is honorable,

whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. Read more about this in Timothy:4 and Philippians:4.

Consider:

- Who might consider me a positive example? Who might consider me an example because of my faith? Why?
- Do I seek to set my vision upon those things listed from the whatever list above? How?

Commit:

As the school year begins, in what area from “the whatever list” might I grow? _____

Pray:

Lord, send your Spirit to guide us and strengthen us as we get closer to the beginning of the school year. Help us to become more like Timothy and do whatever it takes to be an example for others. Help us to seek and do God’s will.

Christ, our teacher, help us to learn the ways of love and service. We ask this through Christ Our Lord, AMEN

1. Welcoming the Future



Abraham has a prophecy that a wife will be found for his son, Isaac, among the Canaanites. He sends a servant to seek this wife.

The servant prays for assistance from God. At a well, he meets Rebekah who shows him generous hospitality. The servant

believes that Rebekah is the answer to his prayers and Abraham’s instruction. Eventually, she marries Isaac.

Rebekah’s willingness to assist and greet a stranger ended up changing the entire direction of her life.

You can read the whole story in Genesis: 24.

Consider:

- As you enter into the school year, what generous acts might you undertake to show a sense of welcome to others?
- How open are you to new directions and changes in your life? In what ways do you communicate openness towards your friends? To teachers?

Commit:

As the school year begins, I will welcome the future by _____

Pray:

Lord, send your Spirit to guide us and strengthen us as we get closer to the beginning of the school year. Help us to become more like Rebekah in responding openly to the opportunities before us. Help us to seek and do God’s will.

Christ, our teacher, help us to learn the ways of love and service. We ask this through Christ Our Lord, AMEN

2. Observing and Helping



Miriam was Moses' older sister. When Moses was born, he was hidden from the Egyptians. The Pharaoh had order that all newborn male Israelites be drowned. Eventually, he was "given up" for adoption, but his sister always kept watch for him and would intervene on his behalf.

Miriam took care of another who was in need of protection and assistance. She bravely spoke up on another's behalf. Moses is a very significant Old Testament hero, but would never have become so without the watchful assistance from Miriam. You can read the whole story in Exodus: 2.

Consider:

- As you enter into the school year, who are those that you might consider "watching over" as they begin the school year? Why?
- In what ways might you quietly and gently act of their behalf?

Commit:

As the school year begins, I will keep watchful care for _____
by _____

Pray:

Lord, send your Spirit to guide us and strengthen us as we get closer to the beginning of the school year. Help us to become more like Miriam in observing and caring for others around us. Help us to seek and do God's will.

Christ, our teacher, help us to learn the ways of love and service. We ask this through Christ Our Lord, AMEN

7. What Good is That?



A large crowd had gathered to hear Jesus speak. There was not enough to feed the crowds nor enough to purchase food for such a crowd.

Andrew, a disciple, did find a boy with five loaves of bread and two fish, but he wondered "What good are these for so many?"

Unlike others identified in this novena / devotional, this young person is not known by name. Nonetheless, he has a key and significant role in a memorable miracle performed by Jesus. The Lord transforms a meager offering of food and provides so much food for the crowd that the scraps are gathered into twelve baskets. You can read the whole story in John: 6.

Consider:

- What small gifts / traits / abilities do you have that might be shared with others?
- Do you believe God can work wonders with your meager offerings? Why? Why not?

Commit:

As the school year begins, I intend to share this gift of mine with others by: _____

Pray:

Lord, send your Spirit to guide us and strengthen us as we get closer to the beginning of the school year. Help us to become more like the boy with the loaves and fishes who shared freely of his gifts. Help us to seek and do God's will.

Christ, our teacher, help us to learn the ways of love and service. We ask this through Christ Our Lord, AMEN

6. The Lord is with You



You most likely already know well the Christmas story. It starts with an angel appearing to a young woman. The angel tells the virgin that she is soon to be pregnant and that the child will be called holy, the Son of God. Jesus is born in a stable and that's the story of Christmas right?

Except, the very beginning of the story starts with the angel saying *Hail, favored one! The Lord is with you. Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God.* You can read the whole story in Luke: 1.

Mary's story starts with her being reminded that she is favored, God is with her, and there is no reason for fear.

Consider:

- Sometimes we make decisions out of love and other times out of fear. Can you give examples of such decisions?
- If you are favored and believe God is with you, what could possibly stop you from making a difference, small or large, in the world around you?

Commit:

As the school year begins, I will recognize that God is indeed with me. Others will notice this difference in me because they will see _____

Pray:

Lord, send your Spirit to guide us and strengthen us as we get closer to the beginning of the school year. Help us to become more like Mary responding to the call of the Lord. Help us to seek and do God's will.

Christ, our teacher, help us to learn the ways of love and service. We ask this through Christ Our Lord, AMEN

3. Hearing the Voice



Samuel was serving as an aide to the high priest Eli. Samuel was sleeping in the temple near the arc of the covenant when he heard his name called in the middle of the night. He went to Eli and said "Here I am. You called me." Eli said he had not.

This occurred a second time and then a third before Eli recognized that it was the Lord calling to young Samuel. He instructed Samuel, if it should occur again, to respond "*Speak Lord, for your servant is listening.*" It was then that God revealed resounding news of what was to soon occur. You can read the whole story in 1 Samuel: 3.

Consider:

- Has there been a time where you might have heard the voice of God whispering into your heart? What was it like? Why do you believe it is true?
- How do we discern what is the voice of God separate from what is being communicated from our own intentions or what the voices all around us indicate?

Commit:

As the school year begins, I promise to daily find a quiet moment and quietly pray "*Speak Lord, for your servant is listening.*" When I will do this is _____

Pray:

Lord, send your Spirit to guide us and strengthen us as we get closer to the beginning of the school year. Help us to become more like Samuel and listen for the voice of God speaking into my life. Help us to seek and do God's will.

Christ, our teacher, help us to learn the ways of love and service. We ask this through Christ Our Lord, AMEN

4. Standing Up



Sometimes, battles came down to the “champion” of the rivals against a singular competitor from the other side... with everything at stake. The Philistines named Goliath placed himself before the Israelites demanding a rival.

A shepherd boy named David presented himself to the Israelite king, Saul. *But Saul*

answered David, “You cannot go up against this Philistine and fight with him, for you are only a youth, while he has been a warrior from his youth.” David claimed that God protected him when watching his flock and would still do the same for him in this contest. David won the battle not with fists or sword, but with his sling. You can read the whole story in 1 Samuel: 17.

Consider:

- When in school, are there times that someone should take a stand and care for others around them? Are there times that you don’t feel “qualified” (as Saul perceived David) to make such a stand?
- Understanding that God “qualifies” you to do what is right and good, how have you seen “taking a stand” done? How would you do it?

Commit:

As the school year begins, I will protect those who are in need by _____

Pray:

Lord, send your Spirit to guide us and strengthen us as we get closer to the beginning of the school year. Help us to become more like David and standing up for what is right and good. Help us to seek and do God’s will.

Christ, our teacher, help us to learn the ways of love and service. We ask this through Christ Our Lord, AMEN

5. Speaking Up



Jeremiah heard the voice of God. The Lord said to him: *“Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I dedicated you, a prophet to the nations I appointed you.”* Before Jeremiah was even born, God had plans for him.

Jeremiah responded, *“Ah, Lord GOD! I do not know how to speak. I am too young!”*

But the LORD answered me, Do not say, “I am too young. To whomever I send you, you shall go; whatever I command you, you shall speak.” You can read the whole story in Jeremiah: 1.

Jeremiah went on to serve as a prophet, speaking God’s truth in a time when God’s people, the Israelites, felt distant from their Lord.

Consider:

- Are there times that others dismiss you because they perceive you as too young? Are there times that you, like Jeremiah, give yourself a false sense of permission not to respond? Do you use the excuse that you are too young?
- What is one of God’s truths that you know? Does it need to be spoken about more in the world surrounding you?

Commit:

As the school year begins, I will claim that I am old enough now to _____

Pray:

Lord, send your Spirit to guide us and strengthen us as we get closer to the beginning of the school year. Help us to become more like Jeremiah and speak towards God’s truth in the many situations around us. Help us to seek and do God’s will.

Christ, our teacher, help us to learn the ways of love and service. We ask this through Christ Our Lord, AMEN